

OCTOBER 1, 2024

## Hurricane Helene Closes Wildlife Rehabilitation Facilities on the Suncoast The Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida in Overdrive Taking in Overflow

*Venice— OCTOBER 1, 2024* — Many Gulf Coast counties have suffered from the devastating effects of Hurricane Helene. Unfortunately, many of the wildlife rehabilitation facilities on Florida's West Coast were rendered unable to help the many critical patients in dire need of medical care, post-Helene. The Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida's board, staff, and volunteers have stepped up to help with the substantial influx of critical patients. The center property is flooded with rainwater and downed trees, on top of an already complicated landscape due to current onsite construction. Staff members and volunteers continue to work despite the muddy conditions.

Hurricanes and their toll on wildlife are nothing new to the Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida. As any wildlife center can tell you, there is quite a lot of work and preparation that happens before any storm. Part of that preparation work is preparing for a spike in the number of wild animals that will need medical services after the storm passes. No one expected the level of storm surge that inundated our coastline and several of our area's wildlife rehabilitation resources. Many of the damaged centers will be limited in their abilities for quite a while. Upon learning of the damage other centers sustained, The Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida stepped up its already robust rescue game, taking on many more critical patients from several other counties. They want to provide the best critical care and medical treatment to all the injured and orphaned patients. Many babies have become displaced or have been injured between the rain and the flood, and some migratory birds have been shifted off course, becoming debilitated and severely injured. This has all put a strain on a facility that already takes on between 5,000 to 6,000 patients annually.

If you are looking to help, donations can be made on their website at [www.wildlifeswfl.org](http://www.wildlifeswfl.org). All the funds received will go directly to the care of the many patients at the center. You can also find a link to their Wishlist full of specific items the center needs on the website. They are also in need of volunteers from surrounding counties to assist with patient transport. If you are interested, you can apply at [wildlifeswfl.org/volunteering](http://wildlifeswfl.org/volunteering).

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### About the Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida

Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is a wildlife hospital and rehabilitation center that rescues and rehabilitates native wildlife including reptiles, mammals, and birds but excluding marine animals for release back into the wild once healed. They have various programs to help educate the community about the importance of wildlife to the environment and ecosystems and how humans can successfully co-exist. For more information about the Wildlife Center of Southwest Florida, visit [wildlifeswfl.org](http://wildlifeswfl.org).

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